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CADRE Quick-Look

Catalyst for Air & Space Power Research Dialogue

Suggestions for Language Transformation in the US Air Force   John L. Conway III

Problem: The Air Force has no central language program or overarching language plan. While it has "muddled through" each successive crisis requiring Air Force language support, it has not moved beyond *ad hoc* solutions or just-in-time language training. The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) requires many languages and a quick response to any emerging threat. The Air Force's current language posture does not meet these emerging needs.

Background: The August 2002 *Chief's Sight Picture* regarding language sent a clear signal that a cultural change must occur. The 2004 Defense Language Transformation Initiative provides the DOD impetus for direction and will certainly provide the funding to do so. The Air Force response to DOD will have long terms effects on its language capabilities.

Solutions: To jump start this process, specific solutions are grouped below by problem set.

Lack of Air Force Language Advocacy
- Appoint a single language champion at SAF level as the language program office.
  -- The SAF "champion" should create a language cross-talk newsletter to highlight language issues and to provide visibility.

Numerous "Language" Offices, But No One Voice
-Retain current language program offices in intelligence, International Health Services, Security Forces and other career fields, in a "hub and spoke" arrangement with SAF's new language program office.
  --Encourage other disciplines within the Air Force with language requirements to establish similar offices and programs.

Lack of Comprehensive Air Force Language Requirements
- Conduct a comprehensive language survey of foreign language requirements
  --Although redundant, this should be done by discipline (Security Forces, Medical, OSI, etc.), by MAJCOM (ACC, PACAF, etc.), and by AOR to assure its thoroughness.
- Once captured, codify requirements in OPLANs and for AEF rotations
  -- Modify UMDs to match language requirements
  -- Consider establishing language UTCs to "package" language requirements for a specific task/theater

Uneven Data Collection and Manipulation
- Conduct a mandatory vice voluntary language survey of the Total Force (to include AF civilians)
  --Create a comprehensive computer database of the results that lists language(s), perceived fluency (via AFLSAB), tested fluency (DLPT scores), and method by which obtained
  -- Use it for short fuse language requirements and for assignments
  -- Require annual updates/recertification by organization

Incomplete Identification of Entry Level Personnel With Language Skills
- Require the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) be given to all BMT, OTS, Academy, and AFROTC cadets to capture potential language skills and aptitudes.
  -- Consider making the DLAB mandatory after promotion to 0-5 vice 0-6

Lack of Language Awareness Throughout The Air Force
  - Educate leadership on the need for effective language support in coalition warfare.
  - Cull JULLS and other Lessons Learned from previous operations and publicize language issues the
    Language Crosstalk newsletter
  - Inject language problems into Red Flag exercises and into the scenarios at the Air Force Wargaming Center
  - Direct cultural awareness programs at Base Education Centers to add complementary language awareness programs

No Roadmap for Formal Language Education & Training
  - The 5th year AFROTC language scholarship program has died; revive it for non-technical cadets
  - Expand the Air Force Academy's foreign language offerings to meet USAF needs

Little Attention to Language Recruiting & Retention Issues
  - Institute a Recruiting Bonus for 3/3 linguists while maintaining their reenlistment bonus
  - Create a recruiter bonus for native speakers in targeted languages
    -- Target Junior College language programs for recruiting efforts in key languages
  - Institute full FLPP for 3/3 proficiency in a second language
  - Award FLPP parity for the Total Force to meet the recommendation of the 9th *Quadrennieal Defense Review*

Incomplete Planning for Language Training
  - Make language immersion training, such as SAF/IA's LASI program, a follow-on requirement for all language
    school graduates

Little Reward or Recognition for Language Proficiency
  - Conduct a market survey of civilian contractor costs and Civil Service pay data to determine the proper bonus
    amounts for language proficiency
  - Amend AFI 36-2803 to award an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Force Training Ribbon for attainment of 3/3 on
    the DLPT in a targeted language
    -- Award one WAPS point to eligible enlisted personnel at the same time
  - Amend AFI 36-8001 to authorize Additional Ground Training Periods (AGTPs), similar to Additional
    Flying Training Periods (AFTPs) to compensate Guard/Reserve linguists for additional language
    proficiency study.

Underutilization of Available Resources
  - Determine all of the funding available for Air Force language programs, to include proficiency maintenance
    programs, and ensure that annual SAF budget rollups reflect true Air Force needs.
  - Work toward reducing contract translators.
    -- Increase the number of Civil Service language positions.
    -- Get serious about using emerging technology to augment translation of open source documents and assist in
       field operations.
    -- Establish "triage" procedures to be able to use translators without clearances for routine
       document exploitation/translation
    -- Use the Congressionally directed initiative for a Civilian Linguist Reserve Corps to forge a partnership within
       the Air Force retiree community
    -- Look at how our sister services—particularly the Army—and DOD agencies approach their language issues and
    adopt their
       best practices.